SUBMITTING PROPOSALS FOR NEW DEGREE PROGRAMS

Approval of new degree programs, and recommendations to modify existing degree programs, comes under the purview of the Graduate Assembly. (Handbook of Operating Procedures 9-1240, The Graduate School.) The rules and procedures associated with various types of program proposals vary and are outlined on the Graduate School’s website at https://gradschool.utexas.edu/graduate-program-legislation.

Along with academic review, many proposals require special attention to the mode of delivery of courses and may include special fee arrangements that require approval. Those wishing to establish new programs, particularly programs delivered on different schedules or in different locations, or by various electronic means, need to be aware that these new programs may pose questions about grades, certification for various purposes, student services, and the collection of fees. These questions need to be addressed in parallel with the academic review.

In order to assist both those proposing new programs and those who must implement them into the University's admission and registration processes, the following guidelines are offered:

1. Preliminary Discussions. It is always a good idea to start out with preliminary discussions with those who are going to be involved with the funding and/or approval of a program—the department chair, the dean, the Graduate School, and the Provost's Office (if approval of special fees is required). Informal discussions of proposals frequently help make the formal approval process go more smoothly and often prevent delays along the line. It is very difficult to predict exactly how long an approval process will take, but it is only prudent to leave enough time for various offices and the Graduate Assembly to give thorough consideration to a proposal. The Graduate Catalog is issued each year at the end of August, so final approval of all degree proposals must be completed by early to mid-spring. The 2021-2022 Graduate Catalog will be issued in August 2021, but all approvals and final catalog copy must be in place by mid-March 2021.

2. Guidelines. For most proposals, it saves time to use the guidelines of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board from the outset because many proposals will need THECB approval. There are THECB guidelines and templates for proposing new degrees and for updating existing programs. Copies are available from the Graduate School and on the Coordinating Board’s Academic Program Development and Modifications web site at https://www.highered.texas.gov/institutional-resources-programs/public-universities-health-related-institutions/academic-program-development-modifications/.

Also, a one-page summary of the proposal is required for inclusion in the agenda of the Graduate Assembly. Please send it when the original proposal is submitted to the Graduate School.

3. College and Program Endorsements. Proposals should include the endorsements of the appropriate college dean(s), chair(s)/director(s) of the academic departments/programs, and chair(s) of the Graduate Studies Committee(s) The endorsements and statements may be
submitted as part of the proposal document or transmittal letter to the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies.

4. **Graduate School Review.** Degree program proposals must be submitted to the Graduate School for review. The purpose of the review is to determine that a proposal meets all current Graduate School degree requirements. A brief transmittal letter addressed to the Graduate Dean should request that the proposal be forwarded to the Graduate Assembly for its consideration and approval.

5. **Additional Guidelines and Questions for Self-Funded (Option III) Programs.** If the program proposal is related to a self-funded (Option III) program, the "Revised Guidelines for Option III Graduate Degree Programs (Revised 2018)" should be carefully followed. Proposals to offer new Option III programs must include a description of the GSC vote(s) and resulting recommendation(s). (See Appendix A.) When the budgetary items in the proposals have been approved, at least in principle, by the Provost's office, a copy of the budget with the Provost's approval indicated on the page should be attached to the proposal. **No self-funded (Option III) degree proposal will be forwarded to the Academic Committee without approved budget and funding information attached.**

In order to deliver degree programs in a nontraditional schedule, format, class meeting time, and/or location, the usual means by which students are admitted, registered, billed, and their grades recorded may have to be modified. While faculty members proposing programs to be offered in new forms are not expected to know the complexities of the University's registration and billing procedures, these elements should be addressed in advance. Consequently, if variations from normal procedures are anticipated, various University offices should be alerted. A checklist of different kinds of arrangements and the offices/individuals who can offer help in implementing them is given in Appendix B.

6. **The Graduate Assembly.** The Academic Committee of the Graduate Assembly is charged with the review of new graduate degree programs or recommendation of modifications of existing programs. Although a proposal is submitted in the form specified in THECB guidelines, it may not provide enough information for the Academic Committee. A list of some additional questions and information the Academic Committee may seek is given in Appendix C.

**Budget and funding source information, approved at least in principle by the Provost’s Office, must be attached to all degree program proposals. If no additional funding is needed, a statement to that effect must be in the proposal. All proposals must include assurances that the new program will have no adverse effect on present programs.**

Meetings of the Academic Committee are scheduled so that recommendations for action may be made at the regularly scheduled Assembly meetings and summaries of proposals circulated with the agenda of the Assembly. **Proposals should be submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies at least three weeks prior to the Academic Committee meeting at which the proposal is to be considered.**

A representative of the group submitting the proposal is invited to meet with the Academic Committee and, again, to attend the Assembly meeting itself to answer questions that may arise.
The Secretary of the Graduate Assembly classifies legislation as major or minor. If a proposal is classified as major legislation, a summary is then circulated to all members of Graduate Studies Committees. Approval becomes effective on a no-protest basis 14 days from the date of circulation. Typically, proposals to create new degrees or to modify existing degree programs are classified as minor legislation.

A description of the Graduate Assembly’s operating procedures are published in HOP 2-1210-PM, Rules and By-Laws of the Graduate Assembly at https://policies.utexas.edu/policies/rules-and-laws-graduate-assembly

7. UT Administrative Approval. Upon approval by the Graduate Assembly, the Graduate Dean approves and forwards the legislation to the President (or Provost). The President (or Provost) then forwards the legislation with his/her approval to the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (EVC) at UT System.

8. UT System Approval. Proposals to create new Master’s degree programs or to modify existing degree programs are approved by the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and referred to the THECB for final approval. Dual-degree arrangements involving two existing degree programs at UT Austin are approved by the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and referred to the THECB for information purposes only.

Proposals to create new PhD degree programs, programs in the field of Engineering, and programs with budgets that exceed $2 million require review by the full Board of Regents. Upon receipt, UT System staff forward these proposals to the Coordinating Board’s Strategic Planning and Policy Committee (SPPC) for review prior to placing them on the agenda for approval by the Board of Regents. The Regents meet four times a year: February, May, August, and November. Six to eight weeks must be allowed for items to be placed on the Regents’ agenda or docket. Following Regents’ approval, the legislation is returned to the SPPC for further review and final approval.

9. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) Review and Action. The THECB requests 90 days to study new degree proposals. A statement of Adequacy of Financing must be submitted when the proposal is submitted. When new doctoral programs are submitted to the Coordinating Board, a subcommittee of the Board will plan a site visit to the institution proposing the degree.

10. Distance Learning.

New degree or certificate program(s). If 25% or more of the courses required for a new degree or certificate program will be offered through distance learning--either by faculty traveling to the remote site or by courses offered electronically—notification to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) is required. If 50% or more of the courses required for program will be offered through distance learning, the program must be approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board with notification and approval of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). In addition to the information required by the appropriate THECB format guidelines, proposals to offer distance learning should include the following information:

- a description of the proposed course(s) or program;
• the plan for delivery (technology);
• a faculty development plan;
• a description of student support services;
• an evaluation plan for the course(s) or program; and
• a proposed budget (of particular interest for degree programs).

Expansion of authority to offer an approved degree or certificate program at a new site. Those wishing to offer an approved degree or certificate program at additional remote sites must submit requests to the Graduate Dean and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. Proposals must comply with all of the quality standards of the originally approved program. Guidelines are available from the Office of Graduate Studies or on the THECB website at https://www.highered.texas.gov/institutional-resources-programs/public-universities-health-related-institutions/academic-program-development-modifications/distance-education-resources/distance-education-modifications-requests/.

11. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

SACS requires notification of substantive changes, which they define as significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of the institution. Substantive changes are described at http://www.sacsoc.org/pdf/081705/SubstantiveChange.pdf and include items such as closing a degree program and entering into a dual- or joint-degree arrangement with another institution. Approval by the SACS Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) must be obtained well in advance of implementation of the program or degree. If a prospectus is required, it is usually more efficient to submit a single proposal to the Graduate School following the guidelines of SACS and the Coordinating Board with sections indexed accordingly.

Questions? Contact Michelle Broadway, Assistant Dean
Graduate School, Main 101, G0400
E-mail: mbroadway@austin.utexas.edu

Revised September 1, 2020
Appendix A

(Revised Guidelines for Option III Degree Programs – Revised 2018)
Appendix B

Admissions: Variations in submitting applications, international applications, transmittal to program director, application fee, etc.

Shannon Neuse
Assistant Director of Admissions
Graduate and International Admissions Center (GIAC)
Shannon.neuse@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 475-7395

Registration: Registration for classes, selection of classes, optional fees, enrollment certification, grade reporting, student services, payment of tuition and fees

Priscilla White
Assistant Registrar
Priscilla.white@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 475-7607

Graduate Catalog: Publication and/or modification of official program descriptions.

Priscilla White
Assistant Registrar
Priscilla.white@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 475-7607

Student Accounting/Special Billing

Tuition Billing
tuition@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 475-7666

Delivery via Distance Learning/Out of State, Out of Country: Follow THECB guidelines and also touch base with Linda Dickens regarding SACS-COC approval.

Linda Dickens
Senior Director of Institutional Accreditation and Effectiveness
Linda.dickens@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 232-2646

Budget Submission

Don Aleman
Chief Business Officer, Resource Management and the Graduate School
aleman@austin.utexas.edu
(512) 471-6384
Appendix C

The following list of questions has been provided by the Academic Committee of the Graduate Assembly to help those preparing proposals. The questions do not necessarily duplicate the information required in the THECB guidelines, but rather would augment that information.

1. How will the new program be staffed, particularly as staffing this program may affect current programs?

2. What are the reasons for establishing the new program? The Coordinating Board focuses on need and duplication of programs in the state, but there may be other good reasons to establish new programs or versions of old ones.

3. How will quality be assured and what review and evaluation procedures are contemplated?

4. A list of core faculty with brief paragraphs on areas of expertise should be included.

5. Particularly with proposals that are interdisciplinary in character and break new ground in terms of combining areas and fields, a sufficient amount of background material should be included.

6. How will students be recruited for the program?

7. Not only general requirements, but a sample program of coursework with a semester-by-semester plan should be included. Include information on the number of required semesters for graduation, the beginning semester (fall, spring, or summer), whether students will be required to attend during the summer, whether there will be overlapping cohorts, and any other information that will provide a clear picture of how the program will be structured.

8. What are the financial resources for the program, including support for students?

9. What are the facilities and equipment for the program?

10. Will there be distance-learning components? If so, describe.

11. Is the proposed degree program currently an Option I program? If not, describe plans to develop an Option I program or, if there are no plans, explain why an Option I program is not contemplated.